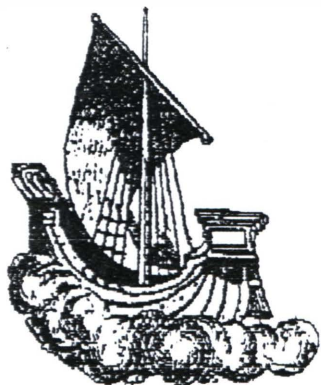




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Magonia

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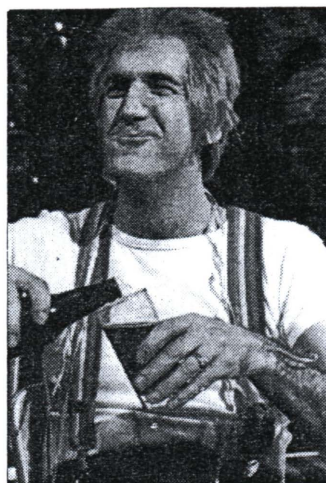
PETER ROGERSON'S NORTHERN ECHOES

EDDIE Bullard's piece on 'variability' is being answered elsewhere in this issue by Hilary Evans, and I hope to produce a much more detailed study of abductions in future issues of *Magonia*. However my own impression from Bullard's own catalogue, my own INTCAT and other sources is that there is no lack of variation. We have accounts of porpoise-faced entities (Womak), walking carrots with hypnotic eyes like the snake in *Jungle Book* (Fredericks), living

machines (Parrish), spirits from the noosphere (Weston), giant brains (Hodges), and so on. Encounter scenarios range from stories of space brothers to satanic abuses, extraterrestrial rapists, hybrid babies and a couple of cases of the dead among the fairies. What haven't we got?

However these stories are mostly reaching us through filters, and the weaker the ufological filter, the wider the variation. Compare the stories recounted by Edith Fiore with the more homogenised accounts from Budd Hopkins. Cases which stray too far from type simply do not get through into the 'respectable literature'. For example if you discard the 'forced entry' and the 'medical examination', you are left with a contactee case, which will either go into the waste-paper-basket or will be processed into an acceptable format.

Bullard argues that abduction accounts exploit only a limited range of science fiction ideas; my response is "easier said than done". Any attempt to expand the otherworld-journey aspect of the account will, without acceptable talent, become as tedious as Artur Bertholi's sojourn on Acart. Betty Andreassen and Ray Fowler have pushed the stories as far as they will go, probably a little too far.



But new motifs do occur. When Bullard compiled his study in 1987 he did not have a motif for hybrid babies, yet within a couple of years they have become the central theme of the stories. Further development of this theme poses some problems, though meetings between middle-aged abductees and their adult hybrid offspring seems the obvious next step (a chance for some of the classic abductees of the seventies to make a comeback?). Beyond that real problems

concerning physical evidence appear - you just know that no Grey is going to appear on the Oprah Winfrey show - and just how is a dying abductee going to be spirited away by their space children without the authorities asking questions?

If tradition can be relied on, Betty Andreassen as midwife to the fairies may have some mileage (when is the fairy ointment going to be introduced?) Another possible theme is an adult abductee's childhood memory of being confronted by a deserting or reported dead mother in a childhood abduction.

For an abduction story now to be successful it must stay close to both old and new traditions. It should centre on fairyland as false glamour, with hints that ufonauts are deceivers or fallen angels or inhabitants of the land of the Fisher King. The abductees should have good surreal questions such as "are ye the watchman of this town" or "children of the northlands who stumble in perpetual darkness" or "though I tarry a thousand years the only water in this desert shall be thy tears". The account should be spooky rather than nuts-and-bolts, should involve hypnotic regression, children and a cuddly family pet. I should keep philosophy and technical descriptions to a minimum. It's human interest that sells these days!

Folklore Rules

Hilary Evans

the abduction debate

The trouble about Eddie Bullard, he's such a nice fellow, we all want to help him in this distressing situation he's in: the situation, that is, of not sharing the same view on abductions as the rest of us.

He's such a reasonable fellow, we feel, surely we have only to murmur a few reasonable words to have him come over to our way of thinking? And when he doesn't, we tell ourselves it's only because he keeps bad company. Left to himself...

Should we bother? Why don't we leave him with his delusions, if he's happy with them? Except he obviously isn't; it clearly distresses him to see the rest of us so wrong-headed in our ideas. And we, for our part, if we are honest (and we are, chaps, aren't we?) we ask ourselves: if someone so fair-minded as Eddie Bullard doesn't share our ideas, could our ideas just possibly be mistaken?

The fact is that, irrespective of our concern for Eddie Bullard's peace of mind, he is the perfect object to bounce our ideas off and see if they come back to us intact.

What Bullard believes

Bullard's argument can be summarised as follows:

1: those who favour a psychosocial explanation for the abduction experience ('PS-proponents' from here on) refuse to accept the abductions-are-real hypothesis (AAR from here on) because of the parallels with folklore.

2: their argument is invalid, because it does not conform to the rules of folklore.

3: therefore, in the absence of any reasonable alternative, the AAR-hypothesis is the more probable explanation.

I think he is mistaken on three counts:

First, I don't think there are any such rules.

Second, even if there were, I don't think we would be obliged to respect them.

Third, PS-proponents do not base

their position solely on the parallels with folklore.

Rules? What rules? I see no rules...

It doesn't surprise me that Bullard, as a professional folklorist, wishes to think of his subject as possessing what, if it lacked them, might leave him feeling improperly dressed: namely *rules*. So he wags his finger at the PS-proponents, accusing us of seeking to 'play the game by half the rules'.

But from what I can see of folklore, it is the most amorphous, least defined of subjects. School-of-thought after school-of-thought has sought to impose its scheme of things on the subject, and to no avail. Folklore remains a free-for-all field where hardly any two players are wearing the same shirts.

We can see this in a matter particularly relevant to abductions, the question of diffusion: how does folklore - myth, rumour etc. - proliferate? Do they spread by some subtle contagion? Do they manifest spontaneously here and yon triggered by some Jungian archetype mechanism? Is some Sheldrakean process at work?

In her classic work, *Mythes de Guerre*, Marie Bonaparte presents us with a shoal of foaftales from WW2, showing how the same stories (with variations) arose - seemingly spontaneously and simultaneously - on both sides of the line. She is inclined to account for both the synchronicity and the variations on psychoanalytic grounds; others will prefer to think that some kind of diffusionist process is at work; yet others will have yet other suggestions. The point is that as things stand, it's anyone's guess how myths are created: the field is wide open.

And so it is, I suggest, with the *similarity con variazione* which so disconcertingly distinguishes the abduction experience. There is no user's guide which presents us with a handy set of rules.

On not having too much respect for rules

Even if there existed a set of rules bearing the imprimatur of the Folklore Society or some such recognised authority, it is by no means certain that we could, or even should, respect them. Folklore, as Bullard recognises, is a constantly developing thing; and even if rules could be derived from past experience, they might well need to be modified in the light of later experience.

This is especially likely to be true of abductions, because for all the parallels with folklore, they display many features which have no precedent in the past. Bullard concludes this is because abductions are not folklore at all, but real experience. But this conclusion is not the only one possible. There are at least two valid alternatives. Abductions may not conform to traditional folklore for either, or both, of two reasons: first because they represent a **new development** in this constantly developing field of study; and/or second,

because they are not *just* folklore, but **folklore-plus**, and it is this plus which is responsible for their unprecedented character.

Goodbye Goodwife...

'Something is clearly peculiar here,' says Bullard in the course of his paper, bothered by the 'peculiar stability' of the reports. Indeed it is. But couldn't it be that abductions - even to the extent that they are folklore experiences at all - are not the kind of folklore Bullard is used to? He speaks of the abduction experient as 'seldom forgetting or fumbling the narration as *most ordinary storytellers do*' (my italics) - conjuring up an image of the old goodwife in the chimney corner sending the young 'uns at her knee to their beds trembling at the tale of Johnnie Rimmer's hairbreadth encounter with the Mersey Devil...

But suppose abductees aren't like that? Suppose they are telling their stories not as spine-tingling winter's tales but out of some gut-churning inner need? Why should we expect them to do as 'most ordinary storytellers' do?

See, once again, the pitfalls into which Eddie-Head-in-Book is liable to trip if he doesn't look up from his How To Be A Folklorist manual. For when he says 'these reports do not act like folklore' what he is really saying is 'these reports do not act like the folklore I'm used to'.

Not just folklore, but folklore-plus

But Bullard is on the wrong foot anyway if he supposes the PS-proponents interpret abductions *solely* in terms of folklore. This of course is nonsense, and I can't believe Bullard really thinks so. But what other conclusion can we draw from his definition of what he supposes to be the PS position:

If abduction stories can be traced to the patterns and motifs of other stories, or to the psychological underpinning of all stories, these very ties identify abductions as folklore, pure and simple.

Neither Vallee nor Meheust - to take the two most prominent exponents - has ever offered or would ever offer so simplistic an interpretation.

Rather, folklore is to them as to all PS-proponents just one of several realms of experience which contribute to our understanding of abduction stories. We look also to other forms of communal fantasy. Meheust's first book, after all, was about flying saucers and science fiction, an avenue which Kottmeyer too has explored with convincing results. Science fiction has much in common with folklore, but it cannot possibly qualify *as* folklore despite the obvious links and relevancies.

Other parallels have been drawn with witchcraft, with convent hysteria, with the convulsionaries and the visionaries, with demon possession and revivalist epidemics, with all kinds of communal fantasy.

As Phil Klass reminds us, abductions are a dangerous game: one of the greatest dangers comes from those who play the game thinking they know the rules.



abduction debate

So – and I think I speak for all who prefer some kind of PS explanation, however much we may diverge as to which particular form of it we may espouse – the abduction experience is never *simply* folklore: it is always folklore with an admixture.

'swarms of variants'

Bullard states – and surely we all agree – that 'swarms of variants are the living manifestation of folklore'. It could hardly be otherwise: for what is *folklore*, but the accumulation and distillation of lots and lots of bits of *individual*lore. From a host of one-of-a-kind instances, the individual elements are filtered out and the shared elements retained, so that a stereotypical communal experience can be abstracted and defined. But this stereotype is no more than a convenient fiction: it is a Platonic ideal, which never exists in its pure form except in the minds of those who fabricate it, never more than a part of the overall experience – the 'highest common factor' as we were taught at school.

Each abduction is at once a shared 'story', broadly conforming to a pattern, and an individual experience, whose relevance is only to the individual's needs, preoccupations, hopes and fears. To suggest that the individual abduction is a 'folklore experience' would be nonsense – but then no one is making any such suggestion. What the PS-proponents are suggesting is that the *composite* abduction experience – the depersonalised and sanitised abstraction – can be paralleled with certain folklore themes, and that this can help us understand what is happening in individual instances.

In the section devoted to the PS approach in his *Encyclopedia of UFOs*, Jerry Clark was both fair and perceptive. It is an excellent position statement, particularly since it is made by someone who does not share that position. But he makes a fundamental error which

Bullard also, albeit only implicitly, seems to be making: Clark speaks of **the** PS hypothesis, but this is as much an abstraction as the stereotype abduction.

What there is, is a psychosocial *approach*: but though there are many who favour that approach, there are probably as many PS-hypotheses as there are PS-proponents.

As I see it, the abduction experience is an admixture of 'folklore' – in the form of a shared myth – with a deep and often very serious individual need. The individual draws on the folklore themes to give his private experience the necessary public 'credentials'. By creating a fantasy scenario whose broad outline will be recognised by the consensus as 'an abduction story', he obtains a degree of legitimacy for the experience as a whole and therefore for those elements which are purely personal to himself: just as in other forms of behaviour such as seeing visions, dissociation of the personality, trance communication and channeling, stereotypes have come into being, which serve as sustaining structures for individual experiences which lack the strength to stand on their own.

A choice of scripts

Some see visions, some are possessed by demons, some are abducted by aliens. Each of these behaviours is chosen, subconsciously, because it is felt by the individual to be an appropriate way of externalising an internal dilemma, crisis or whatever. And it is this internal, personal core which causes the variations, so the abduction experience of Kathie Davis will conform to the folklore model only so far as it is necessary for it to qualify as something that others will recognise (or, it may be argued, where she herself can feel justified in distancing herself from the experience, in effect saying it wasn't me, it was THEM).

Cont. p. 14

Seeing Things

Patrick Harper

I have always felt uneasy about the complacency with which ufologists repeat the assertion that 90% (or 95%) of UFO sightings are misidentifications of ordinary aerial objects such as stars, planets, birds, clouds, aircraft, etc. (I don't believe in weather balloons); or else of natural phenomena such as patches of light, optical reflections etc. (whatever they are). I don't like the superior air which creeps into reports of UFOs which turn out to have one of these simple explanations. It reminds me of a school seniority system: the scientists look down on the ufologists for believing in UFOs, and the ufologists, who want to become (of all things) scientists, look down on poor benighted passers-by who mistake simple weather balloons (or whatever) for what they are pleased to call genuine UFOs.

At a *Magonia* conference in Mortlake library some years ago, we listened briefly to a radio phone-in on UFOs which happened to coincide with the conference. How we all hooted when Val of Peckham rang in to say that she had been disturbed by a weird light in the sky! It had seemed to be watching her, it was definitely intelligent, she had come over all funny, etc. It was obvious from her description that the light in question was a planet. John Rimmer, our kindly host, quelled the derision by reminding us that Val's experience was in a sense the very stuff of ufology -- indeed, that many of the eminent ufologists present had been seized by the subject through just such an encounter, mistaken or not. We were suitably chastened.

And so we should be. After all, if I may lapse for a moment into fancy existentialist talk, Val had been confronted in her fallen inauthentic condition with a sense of *the uncanny*. This idea plays a key part in Heidegger's philosophy, for uncanniness is the hallmark of those moments in one's life when, as he says, *angst* brings *Dasein* (being-there) face to face with its terrible freedom -- either to dwell in inauthenticity or to make a bid for self-possession. (More particularly, the uncanny is the summons of conscience, at which we experience a primal guilt -- *Schuld* -- at the fact that the source of our being is a nothingness or, rather, that our being necessarily implies the possibility of non-being. Guilt, then, may play a part in people's

reluctance to report uncanny experiences, usually put down to simple fear of ridicule...)

However, I didn't get you here to show off my profound grasp of existentialism. I just want to suggest that Val had the kind of experience we all have at some time, especially as children: that of seeing a world we had been told was dead, as alive, intelligent, watchful (we all remember the sinister dressing-gown, up to no good on the back of the bedroom door). In other words, that way of seeing the world, and being seen by it, which has been derisively labelled 'animism', is not the prerogative of poor benighted primitives (or even of children), but an experience of reality which can strike at any time, just as it struck a couple (one of whom was, of all things, a *scientist*) who were driving from Shropshire to Cheshire one night in October 1983. They were lengthily and systematically hounded by an aerial object which shone menacing beams of light into their car, terrifying them. In a state of shock, and after much thought, they reported it to (of all things) the Jodrell Bank radio telescope, who passed the report on to Jenny Randles, who kindly wrote it down for us. It turned out that the couple had misperceived the moon.

Perhaps ufology should be less concerned with the nature of the object than with the nature of perception. Here, for instance, is another well-known case of misidentification:

"...do you not see a round disk of fire somewhat like a Guinea? O no, no, I see an Innumerable Company of the Heavenly Host crying 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.'"

The percipient is of course the visionary poet and artist William Blake. The 'disk of fire' is the sun. Blake insisted that his poems were not mere figures of speech but true accounts of the natural world, transformed (invariably personified) by the power of the creative imagination. He could see the sun perfectly well as everyone else does, as a golden Guinea; but he could also see its deeper reality as a heavenly host. He distinguished between seeing *with* the eye and seeing *through* it.

I'm not saying that there are no such things as visual errors. We've all seen lights in the sky which might have been UFOs, but which on closer inspection turned out to be aircraft lights or whatever. But even such simple misidentifications are not wholly neutral or without significance. They are like visual equivalents of Freudian or, more accurately, Jungian slips: they point for a moment to the Unknown which lies both in our depths and in the heights of the sky. Even when we see with and not through the eye, as it were, we are already imagining what we see. Blake's description of the normal sun is already embroidered by a simile, 'like a Guinea'. The whole world is an imaginative construct. There's no such thing as a simple unadorned perception, nor a simple misperception -- let alone Val of Peckham's sighting, charged as it

was with potentially frightful significance.

Was Val satisfied with the explanation that her sighting was 'only a planet'? Was she not made to feel a little foolish, even a little cheated? And what of 'Mrs A' of Hollington, West Sussex, who was watching television on 4 October 1981, when she felt 'compelled' to go to the window, only to see a large bright yellow object in the sky? Joined by her daughter-in-law Janette, the two women watched astonished for half an hour as the object wobbled, pulsated and repeatedly changed shape. Several times, as an aircraft passes nearby, the object emitted smoke and hid itself behind a cloud. Janette saw lights on, and structural sides to, the object. Both women suffered severe recurrent headaches over the following weeks -- a sure sign of a close encounter -- and Mrs A experienced a 14-hour blackout four days after the sighting. The witnesses were convinced they had seen a spacecraft piloted by aliens. Investigation revealed that the object had been the moon.

The usual 'explanation' for such lunatic experiences is 'projection'. The term, derived from Freud and the early Jung, is taken to mean that images from the unconscious are thrown forward, by-passing consciousness, on to the world or on to objects in the world (the night sky makes a particularly handy screen) where they are perceived as something external. This has come to mean that the images are 'only subjective' but are wrongly seen as objective. (Jung became much more equivocal about projection as a result of his alchemical studies.)

However, as Lee Worth Bailey, among others, has argued (in 'Skull's Lantern: psychological projection and the Magic Lantern', *Spring*, 1986), the idea of 'projection' is a metaphor drawn from the model of the magic lanterns which caused so much excitement in the 19th century. While the common people were astounded and terrified by the slide-shows which tended to project images of ghosts and demons, experts and debunkers delighted in exposing the 'fraudulence' of these images. Scientists like David Brewster (d. 1868) published widely read descriptions of how the magic lanterns worked and went on to claim that all so-called visions and apparitions were attributable to them. He asserted that ancient priestcraft employed similar devices to trick people into believing that gods and daemons exist when they were, in fact, only projected delusions.

This notion was to influence Freud who deprecated visions as 'nothing but projections'. And, naturally, just as we tend to model the psyche on our own machines (it's computers now), so it was not long before the magic lantern became the model for our own heads out of which subjective images were projected on a soulless world of objects. The psyche became restricted to the skull, and any of its images encountered outside became delusions which had to be withdrawn back inside. Thus the autonomous myth-making imagination was

reduced to a kind of cine-projector which mechanically threw out fraudulent visual images -- and to hell with the powerful affecting visions of poor benighted bystanders.

I suggest that the idea of projection won't wash. It's simply the corollary of Locke's equally erroneous description of the mind as a 'blank sheet of paper' which passively receives the stamp of external sense impressions. We should rethink our epistemology along the lines of a Blake, understanding that our primary mode of perception is imaginative. We simultaneously see and transform the world. As the ancients knew, the moon is not just a barren planet but a dangerous goddess liable to induce delusions or revelations, madness or mystical experience; and if my two examples are anything to go by, she potentially still is.

We have been brought up with a literal-minded world-view. We demand that objects have only a single identity or meaning. We are educated to see *with* the eye only, in single vision. When the preternatural breaks in upon us, transforming the profane into something sacred, amazing, we are unequipped for it. Instead of seizing on the vision, reflecting on it -- writing poetry if necessary -- we react with fright and panic. Instead of countering like with like, that is, assimilating through imagination the complexity of the image presented to us, we feebly phone scientists for reassurance. We are told we are only 'seeing things' and so we miss the opportunity to grasp that different, more primordial order of reality which lies behind the merely literal.

I'm not suggesting that we strive only to see the world as visionaries. To perceive all aerial objects as angels -- to see only the heavenly host sun and not the guinea sun -- leads to the madhouse. It is just as literal-minded as seeing a light in the sky as only a ball of hot gas or a barren planet, or an extraterrestrial spacecraft. This, too, is a kind of madness, albeit established and called normal. The remedy is to cultivate a sense of metaphor which, as its etymology suggests, is the ability to 'carry across' -- to translate one view of the world in terms of another. Sanity is the possession of what Blake called 'double vision', which allowed him, for example, to see "with my inward eye ... an old man grey / With my outward a thistle across the way."

If Blake had been running the phone-in when Val of Peckham rang in, he would not have told her that she had misidentified a planet; he would have said she was privileged to have glimpsed the awesome form of foam-born Venus rising in splendour from the sea of night. She might then have been emboldened to prise wider that momentary crack in literal reality and to enter that other, imaginative Reality which alone infuses the world with beauty and terror. We don't need to see UFOs in order to enter that Reality because, to the poetic imagination, everything in the sky -- stars, birds, clouds, balloons -- is a UFO whose final reality can never be known. ■

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desperately seeking satan

Roger Sandell outlines recent developments in the Satanism scare, and reviews new books on the subject.



In November 1991 the old Bailey's first Satanic human sacrifice trial took place. Two girls, ten and fourteen, accused their parents and two other people of having forced them to take part in ceremonies in Epping Forest, on the eastern fringes of London, at which babies were killed and buried. In spite of the sensational headlines that greeted the opening of the case it was clear from the start that it had very curious aspects. Despite the unambiguous claims made against them, not one of the accused faced a murder charge but were instead charged with child abuse. The prosecution admitted that digging by the police had produced no buried babies and there was no evidence of any accompanying epidemic of missing babies. After four days the case collapsed when one of the girls stated that she was unsure whether the events described had really happened or were nightmares, and that her grandmother, with whom she was living, has stopped punishing her when she told her about them.

A few weeks before this case took place, the nazi activist Lady Birdwood had been found guilty at the Old Bailey of inciting racial hatred by distributing material accusing Jews of ritual murder, a coincidence which highlighted the way this trial seemed to exploit similar images of Gypsies as child stealers and wizards.

the Satanist ceremonies were said to have taken place at a memorial to Gypsy Smith, the Romany evangelist of the 1930's and 40's, and the defendants included Gypsy Smith's grandson George Gibbard, an Evangelical Christian and South Eastern representative on the National Gypsy Council. 1

Meanwhile hearings into the official handling of the Orkney Satanism case continue. A parent has been cross-examined to explain why she bought a child a video of *The Witches* (for non-cinemagoers, the recent film of the Roald Dahl children's story).

Meanwhile in the USA, bizarre trials continue. In North Carolina a day-care centre owner stands accused of sexual abuse and

Satanic ceremonies. The evidence includes testimony from children describing the presence of lions and elephants at these ceremonies. In Chicago a judge has dismissed a case against a man accused by a five-year-old girl of murdering five identical girls in a human sacrifice. The defence centred on allegations that the child had been coached by Barbara Klein, a counsellor who apparently gave advice to the prosecutors in the recent Old Bailey case. 2

The Satanism scare has now been with us long enough to have produced several books. Patricia Pulling's *The Devil's Web* 3 a US publication sold in Britain in evangelical bookshops, gives a good idea of the different components of the scare. 'Dungeons and Dragons' and similar occult-type games are controlling teenagers minds to the point where they murder each other or commit suicide (the book opens with an account of the allegedly D & D-related suicide of Patricia Pulling's teenage son). Records by heavy-metal rock bands not only contain pro-Satanist lyrics, but also subliminal Satanic messages only audible when played backwards. Many unsolved murders are the work of Satanists.

When examined in detail the evidence for most of these claims evaporates pretty rapidly. The alleged backwards messages in heavy metal records seem to be contemporary versions of tales dating back to the 'sixties of great secrets hidden in rock records of their sleeves. Nothing that is known about record production or the psychology of perception makes them plausible (if it was possible to influence people in this way, why are there no messages like "Buy our next album"?) The whole argument has been reduced to total absurdity by claims of Satanic messages in such places as 'The Mr Ed Song (the theme from the TV series about a talking horse, not the UFO witness).

Stories of groups of Satanists committing random murders appear to have originated with the US wave of alleged cattle mutilations in the 1970's when the mutilations gave rise to rumours of cults carrying out sacrifices. Patricia Pulling's evidence relies on two cases of the last few years. the first is Henry Lee Lucas, a Texas murderer who in 1983 confessed to murdering 360 people as part of the rites of a cult called 'the Hand of Death'. Although Lucas's confessions were widely publicised and were seized upon by police forces anxious to improve their clear-up rate, the only supporting evidence linked Lucas to just one murder, that of his mother, and his claims are now generally discounted by law-enforcement authorities.

The second case is rather more substantial: the Matamoros (Mexico) slayings of 1989 in which at least twelve people were murdered by a drug smuggling gang led by Adolfo Constanzo, a practitioner of the sort of supernatural beliefs held by many poor but otherwise respectable Mexicans. At least one of

these murders, that of an American tourist named Mark Gilroy, does seem to have been seen as a sacrifice to confer magical powers (the gang was exposed after a member drove through a police check, believing himself to be invisible) but it is not clear where religious beliefs began and the general casual violence of drug gangs towards rivals and informers stopped.

The evidence for the alleged ill-effects for Dungeons and Dragons seems similarly inconclusive. Although some press stories have featured allegations of teenage murders and suicides by the game's devotees, further investigation has revealed violent homes or other factors that seem at least as relevant than the fact that those involved had played a game with a US following of several million other players.

Patricia Pulling's account of her son's suicide after a curse was placed on him in a D & D game is certainly a sad tale, but according to local press accounts he was also depressed by his failure in a school election (and one can only be astonished by the fact that his mother had left a pistol freely available while he was alone in the house). The only other evidence for the Satanic effect of D & D games seems to be some cases of adult D & D players being convicted of sexual offences against younger players, but these fall into a long established pattern of paedophiles cultivating activities and interests liable to bring them into contact with children.

Reading Pulling's book suggests that one reason for the current US anti-Satanist scare is the fact that it has connected a wide variety of current American fears. Serial killers, the increasing rate of suicide among young people, the violent messages of some types of popular music, drug gangs, and the increasing presence in the US of immigrants from the Caribbean and Latin America, some of whom maintain traditional non-Christian religious practices, all are linked together in the same way that a few years ago Armageddon theology managed to link a variety of late '70s and early '80s concerns about the US and its place in the world.

The fact that most of these scares are specific to the USA probably accounts for the failure of the scare to achieve such resonance in Britain. However *Children for the Devil* by Tim Tate, researcher for the highly unconvincing *Cook Report* TV programme on Satanism, attempts to make out a case for the reality of Satanism in Britain and the US. 4

Tate attempts to distance himself from Evangelical Christian anti-Satanism. He rejects such manifestations of the scare as campaigns against Halloween celebrations, and heavy metals bands, and accepts modern neo-Paganism as a valid religious belief. Indeed he give some interesting information on the background to US anti-Satanism that I was not previously aware of.

Especially striking is the fact that one

1 As is the usual custom in such cases, Mr Gibbard's name was not given in the press. It is given here because he has chosen to make it public as part of his campaign for compensation for wrongful imprisonment. See *New Statesman*, Nov. 29 1991.

2 *Economist*, Aug. 31 1991; *Fortean Times*, nos. 60 61

3 PULLING, Patricia. *The Devil's Web*, Word Books, 1991.

4 TATE, Tim. *Children for the Devil*



5 Also worth considering in this context are the 'Little Uri Gellers' of the 1970's: children who, following Geller's TV appearances, fooled para-psychologists with simple tricks.

6 COHN, Norman, *Europe's Inner Demons*, Sussex University Press/Heinemann Educational, 1975; Paladin, 1976. See chapter 4.

organisation involved in spreading the anti-Satanist scare is the so-called US Labor Party led by the now-jailed political cultist Lyndon Larouche (Diane Core of 'Childwatch' the charity backed by Geoffrey Dickens MP that has publicised anti-Satanist tales, has also spoken at Larouchist meetings). What is significant about this is that this organisation was spreading similar tales in other contexts long before its present anti-Satanist campaign. In 1974 it claimed to have uncovered a CIA-KGB assassination plot against Larouche. Dissident members of the group were subjected to 'debriefing' sessions, which later resulted in charges of kidnapping against their accusers. As a result the victims told tales, promoted by the Larouche organisation, of CIA brainwashing that involved details identical to those made later in tales of Satanic child abuse. These involved sex with animals, exposure to pornography and scatological humiliations. One detail especially reminiscent of US day-care center Satanism tales is the claim made in the confession of one victim who had been living in London that these events took place in an Islington school when it was closed over the weekend. (Incidentally Larouche has been accused of sexual abuse by female former disciples).

While Tim Tate rejects many features of US anti-Satanism, he nonetheless devotes most of his book to defending the validity of charges of Satanic child abuse (SCA). He begins his argument by claiming that; "Ritual crime, abuse and murder have been reported, investigated, proven and recorded for nearly five hundred years".

To prove this he devotes nearly fifty pages to a resume of the history of Satanism and witchcraft. It is difficult to speak of this section of the book with restraint. Tate gets just about every historical fact wrong and clearly has not the faintest idea of what he is writing about. He shows no sign of having read any serious books on European witchcraft such as Norman Cohn's *Europe's Inner Demons*, Keith Thomas's *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, or Hugh Trevor Roper's *The European Witch Craze of the 16th and 17th Century*. Instead the only historical sources cited are Dr Margaret Murray's discredited writings, H. T. F. Rhodes equally unreliable *The Satanic Mass*, and a Peter Haining pot-boiler (Were these the only books on the subject in his local library perhaps?)

He begins by distinguishing Satanism from witchcraft, and follows Margaret Murray in seeing witchcraft as a primitive nature religion involving the worship of a horned god and moon goddess. He states that: "By the time of Christ this rural pantheistic religion was well established throughout Europe." Oh yes? Where exactly? Such a cult bears no relation to classical or Nordic Paganism, or Celtic Druidism, the main religious systems of immediately pre-Christian Europe.

From this unpromising beginning Tim Tate jumps a millenium to give us his bizarre

version of the witch trial era, arguing that tales of human sacrifice and sex orgies confirm similar modern tales. He does at one point concede that tales told under torture should be treated sceptically, but promptly disregards his own proviso by treating the trials of the Knights Templar, Gilles de Rais and Father Grandier of Loudon without mentioning that torture was employed in all these cases. neither does he point out that all these people had made powerful enemies beforehand. He accepts clearly absurd details such as the eight hundred or so child victims ascribed to de Rais - enough under medieval demographic conditions to depopulate quite a large area. He quotes the alleged Satanic pact given in evidence at the trial of father Grandier without mentioning that it was supposedly countersigned by a devil.

He totally fails to mention many important areas of the witch-mania that are highly relevant to the Satanism scare. He is totally unaware that British witch-trials were very different from those on the continent. The systematic use of torture and centralised inquisitional bodies were not a feature of British trials. As a result the tales of mass sacrifice and huge witches sabbaths are found almost entirely on the continent. the British cases involve fewer defendants and much less spectacular organisations.

There is no discussion of the role played in the witch mania by child accusers who testified to manifest impossibilities, and in some cases resorted to conjuring tricks to create the impression of being bewitched, a subject highly relevant to contemporary SCA cases.⁵ Neither does he discuss the identical accusations of ritual child murder that were commonly made against Jews. If modern SCA claims are vindicated by similar claims made hundreds of years ago, are modern neo-nazi claims vindicated by similar medieval claims?

Not content with relying on discredited ideas from other writers Tate makes some insupportable claims of his own. He sees modern witchcraft as being largely a *xxx* creation and supports this by quoting the confessions of two Cathar witches who confessed to worshipping Satan in fourteenth century trials. The only problem with this is that neither of the witches quoted ever existed. Their confessions are both nineteenth century forgeries, as Tate would have known had he troubled to read Norman Cohn.⁶ So much for Tim Tate as a judge of evidence.

Like many dubious writers on witchcraft he seems especially fascinated by the Black Mass, and devotes several pages to the 1680's 'Affair of the Poisons' and allegations of Black Masses at the court of Louis XIV. Although, as usual, most of the more bizarre allegations in this case come from confessions made under torture, the affair seems to have some factual basis. However the Black Mass of the period bore little resemblance to later fantasies. In an age when the Mass was seen as an almost

magical ceremony and masses might be said for good harvest and success in war it did not seem a very big step to secretly hold masses for purposes not approved by the Church, such as sexual success or the death of an enemy. Such practices were seen more as a testimony to faith in Church rituals than as a blasphemy.

Of course no book of this nature is complete without a lurid account of Alastair Crowley, a figure who in fact, when his more bizarre claims are dismissed, seems simply a not untypical member of the avant-garde of the period exaggerating his own wickedness to outrage convention in a manner similar to Gabriel D'Annunzio and the young Salvador Dali.

A further measure of Tim Tate's historical ignorance is that he seems to know nothing of Gerald B. Gardner, who in the 1940's and 40's originated the 'Wicca' cult which Tate seems to think is genuinely ancient and whose rituals involving nakedness and flagellation are a perfectly genuine example of so-called 'witchcraft' being used as a cover for bizarre sexual practices.

After this lamentable 'historical' section we arrive at the present day. We are presented with a list of modern self-proclaimed 'Satanists' who have appeared in court charged with a variety of offences, chiefly sexual. The list presented is far from exhaustive. Mr Tate's cases do not include Norman Pasnail, the 1970's Jersey (Channel Islands) sex killer who was obsessed with Gilles de Rais, or Vic Norris, the neo-Nazi Satanist and convicted child molester who various investigative journalists have linked with the search for the killers of Hilda Morrell. 7

While these cases should serve as a warning that not all cases where allegations are made are baseless, they take us no nearer to the allegations of large scale undercover Satanist cults and human sacrifice. Most of them involve a single person and the only alleged 'human sacrifice' Tate can find is a case of two Birmingham fans of the pseudo-Satanist band Iron Maiden, one of whom stabbed the other after a party. Although the police officers in charge of the case talked of human sacrifice this failed to impress the Appeal Court who reduced the murder conviction to manslaughter on self-defence grounds. The cases quoted no more validate the more bizarre allegations than the recent case of a rabbinical student from London's Hassidic community convicted of child abuse validates tales of Jewish ritual murder.

Nor does Tate consider these stories in a wider context. As has previously been pointed out in *Magonia*, any form of cultist organisation grouped round a leader seems to be a fertile field for sexual exploitation, whatever its alleged belief. For example the regime of Frank Beck, the Leicester children's home manager recently convicted of sexual assaults on inmates, seems to have had many cult-like features. Beck appeared to have total domination of his staff and inmates, and justified his sexual abuse as therapeutic. 8

Tate takes the SCA cases of the last few years back to the book *Michelle Remembers*. To persuade us to take this book seriously he summarises it in a highly misleading way, omitting to tell us any of the details that make it impossible to take this story at face value. He carefully ignores all the many supernatural claims made in the book, such as the appearance of the Virgin Mary to the abused child Michelle, and the presence at the Satanist ceremonies of Satan himself, speaking in what sounds like fourth-rate heavy-metal lyrics: "Look at my eyes and you can see/ the fire burning inside of me./ Look at the children in them too/ The fire that burns, what is new?". He ignores the prophecies of an Armageddon brought about by a Soviet/Iranian alliance in the early 1980's. Nor does he mention the fact that Michelle has two sisters who strongly deny her story. He gives the impression that her account has been endorsed by the Vatican, whereas the quote from a Canadian archbishop given in the book seems carefully non-committal: "I do not question that for Michelle this experience was real. In time we will know how much of it can be validated. It will require prolonged and careful study. In such mysterious matters hasty conclusions could prove unwise."

Other cases cited by Tim Tate are the US day care cases, and some British ones that he has personally investigated. He is convinced of the accuracy of the children's testimony. Consider these quotes:

"Like many who remain sceptics I tried to write off these children's disclosures as fantasies or the product of watching too many videos. But neither theory works. Tried and tested psychological research has proved that children cannot fantasize the details... to recall it so vividly they have had to have experienced it in some way... More telling still is the way in which the children disclose these incidents. It causes them real visible pain to talk about their experiences. How do I know? Because I have sat with these children - by their request not mine - as they struggled to share the poisoned memories inside them"

"Of all the reports I've received the most personally depressing for me are those dealing with very young children... No matter how familiar researchers become with the details, the knowledge cannot alleviate the horror and confusion of such events - particularly in the lives of the youngest and most vulnerable among us. Yet those provided by three or four-year old children furnish the investigator with valuable evidence concerning the reality of this phenomenon. Since such small children cannot read there is no chance of contamination from written sources. Few TV programmes during early viewing hours have ever offered specific details of this experience... Consequently the details that children relate can be regarded as purer than

7 Searchlight
Anti-Fascist
Monthly. Sept.
1985.
Incidentally
local rumours
have linked the
Murrell case
with witchcraft.
She was killed
on the spring
solstice, and
the wood where
her body was
found had
previously
figured in local
'witches
sabbath' tales.



8 To be precise
as some sort of
'regression
therapy'.
Perhaps we
should be less
trusting of the
bona-fides of
some of those
who offer
similar
therapies in
other contexts.

9 UFO Brigantia,
November 1991.

10 HOUGH,
Peter.
*Witchcraft: a
Strange
Conflict.*
Lutterworth
Press, 1991.

11 HICKS, James.
*In Pursuit of
Satan.*
Prometheus
Press, 1991.

those in adult accounts... But so far our knowledge outpaces our skill in helping people deal with these previously unimaginable experiences. New coping techniques must be introduced, new therapeutic skills must be developed. Much work is to be done if very young lives are not to suffer permanent psychological scarring."

The first quote is from Tim Tate; the second is from Budd Hopkins, describing his interviews with very young children recounting abduction experiences. ⁹ In view of the similarity of their arguments we must conclude that either Satanists are holding hideous ceremonies in our midst *and* aliens are descending to abduct large numbers of people, or that the question of assessing testimony from children (or adults) is rather more complicated than either of these writers allow.

Certain features of the stories Tate looks at underline the similarity between SCA claims and abduction stories. He concedes at one point that some stories contain clearly impossible features and mentions claims of 'operations' that are contradicted by medical evidence, and even a case of a child who claimed to have been abused in a spaceship. 'Natalie', a teenager returned to her mother after living with her grandmother for ten years, tells of being taken into a big house where children were kept in cages and murdered. But the house also had a more curious inhabitant named 'Lucifer':

"He was a sort of friend, at least he seemed to be then... When I was locked up in my room at nan's he used to be there... I had no friends except him... Now I know he was a spirit or something"

Tim Tate seems to have no very clear idea what to make of such stories. However he insists on the literal truth of all the details of them that are not manifestly impossible in spite of all contrary evidence. He tabulates allegations made in 28 US cases. Practically all of them involve claims of babies being slaughtered and acts of child abuse being videoed, but no corpse has ever turned up, no video been recovered. Satanist never get caught by the sort of mischance that commonly happens to non-Satanic criminals. The serial killer Dennis Neilson was caught when neighbours complained about the smell from his house, the Yorkshire Ripper when stopped for a traffic violation. Serial killers usually work alone and the examples of pairs are rare enough to be notorious for years afterwards (e.g. Loeb and Leopard, Brady and Hindley). However we are asked to believe in large groups of people committing murder and torture of a viciousness surpassing the worst of individual serial killers.

Tate seems impressed by Sandy Gallant, a San Francisco police officer widely credited as an expert on Satanic crime. Some of her notes of advice to police forces are printed in an appendix to *The Devil's Web* and they include a quite remarkable list of problems involved in the prosecution of SCA:

"No evidence is found at alleged crime scenes to substantiate statements made by victims. Though homicides are reported no bodies are found. Though children say they saw other children who were kidnapped no record of these children can be found with the National Center for Missing/Exploited Children."

Is any comment necessary?

The British cases described in detail are Nottingham, and others derived from Tate's own interviews. Unfortunately his handling of the historical material already examined means there are problems here. When his assertions can be checked Tate can be shown to have ignored the use of duress in producing confessions and ignored parts of stories which are clearly impossible. Since these are also items of controversy in the modern confessions how can we be sure the same process has not gone on in the summaries of his own interviews?

His section on Nottingham gives some further details about the extended family on whom the allegations centred. These seem to have been a horrifying collection of urban hill-billies living on the fringes of society in a nexus of poverty, crime, incest and subnormality reminiscent of the legendary Sawney Beane family. However the idea of such a family being the high priests of some secret cult seems to owe more to H. P. Lovecraft than reality.

This highlights another problem. Tate rejects the idea propounded by evangelical anti-Satanists that all Satanists are part of a world-wide cult hundreds of years old. He believes rather that modern satanists are simply following information on historical Satanist practices. At one point he remarks the resemblance between one modern Satanist claim, and the case of Gilles de Rais, and demands that sceptics explain how the person making these claims could know such obscure facts. Apart from the fact that de Rais has long been a favourite for 'World's Wickedest Men' type paperbacks, this question is quite meaningless unless one accepts the ancient cult idea that he explicitly rejects. In any case, the Nottingham family do not appear to be the sort of people one can easily imagine researching historic Satanism.

In spite of this, a Nottingham social worker declares herself convinced of the SCA charges when a three-year old produces "a historic Satanist chant". Ignoring the lack of understanding of anyone who thinks there is such a thing, the claim is, as Peter Rogerson points out, identical with the evidence frequently offered in reincarnation claims.

The villains of Tate's account of the Nottingham affair are the police, who he depicts as being blind to SCA evidence and refusing to investigate. He does not mention, much less reply to, the police contention that they searched the houses for supporting evidence and found none. Nor does he point out



that we are asked to believe in mass chanting, murders and the sacrifice of a live sheep (curiously described by the child as being brought in a plastic bag and killed by someone sticking their fingernails into it) in a terraced house, unnoticed by the neighbours. Does Tim Tate not realise that if such dubious material was introduced into court a defence lawyer counsel would have a field day, and the real acts of child abuse that did occur in Nottingham might well have gone unpunished? It may be that the adversarial court system of Britain and the USA is not the best means of sorting out the truth of these cases, but at present it is the one the police have to operate within.

A less tendentious account of the Nottingham case is contained in Peter Hough's *Witchcraft: A Strange Affair*, a journalistic survey of the development of the anti-Satanic scare in Britain. **10** It includes some dubious anecdotes and is more sympathetic to the idea of the pre-Christian antiquity of witchcraft than the evidence warrants, but is a useful and fair-minded account. It includes interviews with people on both sides of the controversy and gives a much more rounded picture of the subcultures of Satanism and amateur occultism. Hough describes the activities of the anti-Satanist con-man Derry Mainwaring-Knight, providing an insight into the credulity of some Evangelicals to any anti-Satanist claims, however ridiculous. He also gives examples of how the activities of some Evangelical anti-Satanists have caused some disturbed people they have come into contact with to become even more disturbed. He looks at the parallels of SCA claims and UFO stories, but only devotes about a page to this. I would have been interested to see this discussed in more detail, something that Peter Hough's involvement in UFO fieldwork investigations makes him well qualified to do.

A different sceptical perspective come from *In Pursuit of Satan*. **11** Written by Jim Hicks, a former US policeman and analyst for the Virginia Department of Justice, he looks at the response of US police departments and the psychiatric and welfare agencies to the SCA scene. The story he tells is alarming. The SCA gospel is spread to local police departments by seminars often organised by Christian fundamentalists. Like sixteenth century witch-finders they seem to define 'supporting evidence' so widely as to make in practically impossible for anyone to defend themselves. (Sandy Gallant advises police seeking evidence of Satanism to search houses for objects including I-Ching books, gongs or bells, and chalices, goblets or cruets) They advocate authoritarian measures such as examining library records to see who is borrowing books on the occult, and spread tales of mass Satanic political conspiracies. Their influence on law enforcement seems a scandal reminiscent of the influence of the Ku Klux Klan on some 1950's police departments.

The promoters of such seminars try to present themselves at 'anti-cultist', apparently defining cults as any non Christian-fundamentalist fringe religious belief. Thus concerns about the rise of superstition and irrationality are seized upon to reinforce political and religious authoritarianism, just as the SCA panic seizes upon increased awareness of the reality of child abuse to promote a similar agenda.

The response of the US psychiatric profession seems to have been, from James Hicks account, equally dubious. Psychiatrists are shown to have accepted obviously apocryphal stories and dubious historical accounts in discussions of SCA in professional journals. Elaborate discussions around the day-care cases have sought to explain why the accused corresponded to no known profile of child molesters or why inspectors or visiting parents never found supporting evidence. (From a British viewpoint it would also be pertinent to ask why these day-care cases seem to be a purely American phenomenon with no parallels in the British cases.)

Looking at the conduct of the day-care cases, Hicks depicts investigators leading child witnesses in a manner which seems to approach child abuse itself. His account of the most notorious of these cases, the McMartin affair, bears very little resemblance to Tim Tate's and the story calls for a complete book of its own (a TV mini-series is not surprisingly planned, but will no doubt simply endorse the view of the affair held by whichever of the protagonists has the most expensive lawyer).

What future developments in this story will be is hard to predict. So far, what it has told us about the continuing ability of irrational panics to exercise wide influence in modern societies is not reassuring.



"Is is not plain that the people had frightened their children with so many tales that they could not sleep without dreaming of the devil and then made the poor women of the town confess what the children had said of them?"

*Bishop Francis
Hutchinson, 1718*

If the PS approach is correct, what we would find is that all abduction experiences tend to share a number of common factors, and to differ in individual details. Which is just what we do find.

This doesn't by any means imply that the PS approach is correct. There are still other problems: for example the remarkable specificity of some details which, it is argued, could not by any reasonable explanation have been known to the individual, and which can therefore only be the result of a real experience. If this is so, it is a formidable challenge to those of us who question the AAR position: but such extraordinary claims need to be supported by something more convincing than the Gee-Whiz assertions of the Believers.

If such support should be forthcoming, many of us might have cause to rethink our positions, just as we would do if a UFO were to touch down in Mortlake churchyard. Bullard may turn out to be justified in his AAR belief. But if so, it will need to be on stronger grounds than by appeal to the rules of folklore.

Bending the rules

As Phil Klass reminds us, abductions are a dangerous game: one of the greatest dangers comes from those who play the game thinking they know the rules. Hopkins tells us he has consulted a number of leading psychologists, and one and all have assured him there is no known psychological model for abduction behaviour. Therefore, according to the psychological rule-book, no psychological explanation can be valid; therefore - the reasoning goes - abductions must be real.

But psychology, like folklore, is concerned with drawing communal conclusions from individual experience: and while it can formulate helpful guidelines in respect of what is communal, what is individual defies formal rule-making - which is why, even after 100+ years of psychology as a formal field of study, we have on-going controversies about psychoanalysis, about hypnosis, about possession, about multiple personality. Hopkins's touching faith in the psychologists' faith in their rule-book has led him into the AAR cul-de-sac: Eddie Bullard's similar faith in the folklore rule-book has led him into the same dead end.

But there is more to abductions than the rule-books know of. Seen en masse, it may look as though a huge communal game is in progress on the abduction playing-field. But look more closely, and you will see that each player is playing a little game of his own, and if there are any rules, they are of his or her own making.

**Please let us know
of changes of
address as soon as
possible**

Following our successful Magonia conference in 1990, we are thinking of holding another informal conference and get-together on the Sunday and Monday of the August Bank Holiday (30th and 31st August 1992).

The location will probably be the same as last time, Sheen Library, easily reached from Central London, the M25, and motorways. The cost, to include hire of premises and food (the excellent buffet meals were a talking-point of our last conference!) should be in the region of £15 for the two days.

So here's a call for participants and contributions. We welcome papers on any UFO and related issues that are relevant to the Magonia approach (or even totally antithetical, what's a UFO conference without at least one blazing row!).

Are you interested enough in the idea to want to come?

Would you like to present a paper or report? Please let us know as soon as possible.

Fuller details next issue when we get an idea who's coming.

LETTERS

Circular Letters

Dear John,

We in the Centre for Crop Circle Studies have much enjoyed your packet of corn flakes in the November issue. It is heartening to have *Magonia's* endorsement for CCCS's view that the crop circles exhibit the operation of intelligence. For sheer inventiveness, exuberance, ingenuity, scale of operation, growing elaboration of design, and sometimes downright playfulness there has been nothing to touch this phenomenon over the past twelve years except possibly the graffiti on the Underground. In retrospect it seems a tragi-comedy that a good atmospheric physicist, Dr. Meaden, was boxed into a meteorological hypothesis by the mere accident of being taken to see those first few singletons at Bratton in 1980 and feeling obliged to invent a new kind of atmospheric vortex to account for them.

What a dance those jokers have led him! By 1989, at the end of a decade of observation, the unfortunate Meaden had come to claim for meteorology not only simple singletons, but doublets, triplets-in-line, triplets-in-triangular array, ringed circles, combinations of ring-and-circle, circles with spurs and tails and even an event in which the circle was divided into quadrants with linear 'combing' of the grain. The invisible artists who were contriving these spectacular must have had many a

quiet chuckle as Meaden stumbled along behind them, elaborating his meteorological model to accommodate each new development. Beginning with a "stationary summer whirlwind" in 1981, he was, in the end, obliged to postulate a "descending plasma vortex", never very well-defined but possessing a bewildering rag-bag of characteristics. For a while this remarkable entity was even claimed as accounting for the exuberant elaborations of 1990, the so-called pictograms, which Meaden regarded as 'aberrant forms' from which we would come to understand such merely routine occurrences as the Celtic Cross of 1988, the ringed circle of 1989 which failed to conserve angular momentum by laying its ring in the 'wrong' direction, and the triangular array at Oadby in Leicestershire which was disposed about a ringed centre.

All the time, as you so rightly say, it must have been due to the operation of intelligent agents! We have clearly been witnessing the most sustained and scientifically informed practical joke in history, designed at every stage to lead the unfortunate Meaden from superfluous refinement to superfluous refinement - a joke, moreover, to which agents in Japan, Australia, Canada, the USA and perhaps (with less evidence) other countries have thought it amusing to contribute. It is heartening to know that *Magonia* agrees with us.

Whether these intelligent agents are yet 'known', as you also

suggest, does seem to us, in our cautious manner, to be slightly ahead of the game. If this were a police enquiry, the file could not yet quite be closed: "persons unknown" (setting aside a few jolly farmers caught faking minor events) would probably be the verdict of the court. So perhaps "unknown intelligence" might be a convenient term on which we could both agree for the time being.

You are of course, entirely free to speculate that these unknowns are human. *Magonia* is, after all, a family magazine; none of us would wish you to become alarmist or over-imaginative.

May I correct one point of fact in an otherwise soberly accurate article? 'Corn flakes' is less than sufficiently embracing. Circle events have sometimes been found in other crops, notably oilseed rape - a fleshy and brittle plant [a description which could apply to many in this field - Ed.] which succumbs to the intelligent agent by (surprisingly) bending rather than breaking. As soon as funding permits, CCCS will be publishing the results of some preliminary soil and crop assays (together with other physical evidence) which may begin to indicate what forces are at work. They do not seem to us at present as likely to be attributable to human activity.

As ever,

Ralph Noyes, London SW3.

Dear John,

No, John, we really cannot say that the corn-circle mystery is solved. It is likely to be an on-going phenomenon. A general sweep of an answer for any one of the three possible categories can blur the facts. (Can anyone suggest a fourth?) Let's just look at a few surface features.

The Meteorological Theory.

Points in favour:

- a. Meaden's ten-year-plus scientific study of the subject, which includes the relationship between atmospheric conditions and the topography of the landscape where many circles form.
- b. Eye-witness reports of circles forming by means of some energy. Yes, eyewitnesses can be unreliable, but whereas UFO eyewitnesses might claim they see 'spaceships' when they are seeing some other anomalous or even natural phenomena, those who have seen circles form do not claim to see anything *other* than circles form. In any case, they *are* seeing something.

c. Support from other physicists and meteorologists. It should be added that the theory now only contends to account for the more simple circles and rings and not the more complex shapes - a point in its favour.

Points against:

- a. The apparent recent evolutionary nature of the phenomenon.
- b. The lack of folklore surrounding the circles in history, notwithstanding the isolated and perhaps dubious example noted in the 'Mowing Devil' story. (Meaden has also attempted to make out a case for circles indeed being present in ancient times, and that the neolithic and bronze age people hallowed the ground on which the circles appeared and constructed their stone circles and round barrows etc. to their dimensions. Also - and perhaps more likely - he suggests that a high proportion of UFO sightings have been misinterpretations of the atmospheric conditions pertaining within the plasma vortex manifestation.

The Human Hoax Theory (or landscape art - I agree this fits it better.)

Points for:

- a. The all-too-human associations in the patterns, e.g., Mandelbrots, flowers, fish, insects, etc.
- b. The impossibility of attributing all these patterns to a random, unusual phenomenon of nature like a plasma vortex.
- c. They are probably not beyond human ingenuity - mostly.
- d. The vast majority, at least of the pictograms are still in a relatively small area of southern England.
- e. As above, the recent evolutionary nature of the events.

Points against:

- a. Most of the *known* hoaxes are of the circle and ring variety.
- b. The known hoaxes do not have the same beauty and perfection. The infamous, possibly military-inspired, Westbury hoax of July 1991 was a rough and ready affair, not a picture which one would want on the wall.
- c. The immense difficulty of producing the most complex geometric forms with a rope and pole in darkness. Three examples: Barbury Castle, a complex world of symbolism and numerology. A display of lights in the sky was seen on the night of its formation. The warden of the Iron-Age Barbury Castle hill-fort heard a thunderous roar and pulsing hum at 3.30 am. He is used to low flying aircraft from

RAF Lyneham. The serpent pictogram at Chilton Foliat, Hungerford had strong dowseable energy flows (but so did the admitted hoax produced by the Wessex Sceptics, according to at least one dowser - Ed.) and some of the pathways had no connections with the 'tramlines'. The quintuplet at Amersham, Bucks appeared on a Sunday morning in a twenty-five minute period between the outward and return journeys of a man walking his dog.

- d. One one particular night three intricate pictograms appeared. Are we to presume there were three different groups of landscape artists out co-incidentally on the same night all producing perfect designs.
- e. Revisitations. A number of circles and pictograms were 're-visited' a few days later when one, or sometimes two, small circles and other features appeared. Would



hoaxers really take the trouble to do this when they would surely be busy making more wonderful designs in other fields? If so, why?

The 'Other Intelligence' Possibility

Points for:

- a. All points listed above against the other theories.
- b. The interaction of humans in the psychic spheres and associated anomalous phenomena.
- c. The weight of numbers of the pictograms within a short space of time.

Points against:

Nothing, absolutely nothing! Because, as you say, we can neither prove or disprove any such apparent intelligent activity by any means at our disposal!

I therefore suggest that we have a phenomenon in which all three possibilities have validity, even

actuality and somewhere interact. But we have to bring into play the intuitive as against merely the mechanical and rational, which seem limited when trying to explain this mystery, and are controlled by sense derived data. Although we cannot see other levels of reality this does not disqualify them. In science itself the mechanical approach is more and more ringing false as the only path, or as an end in itself. Rupert Sheldrake's morphogenic fields could well have a role to play. Could this indeed be an interface between the physical and what we term the etheric levels of manifestation?

We can sit and wonder, but let's wait and see what happens next year. I have outlined just a few features of the mystery which I hope goes to show it is even more complex than one might imagine.

With good wishes

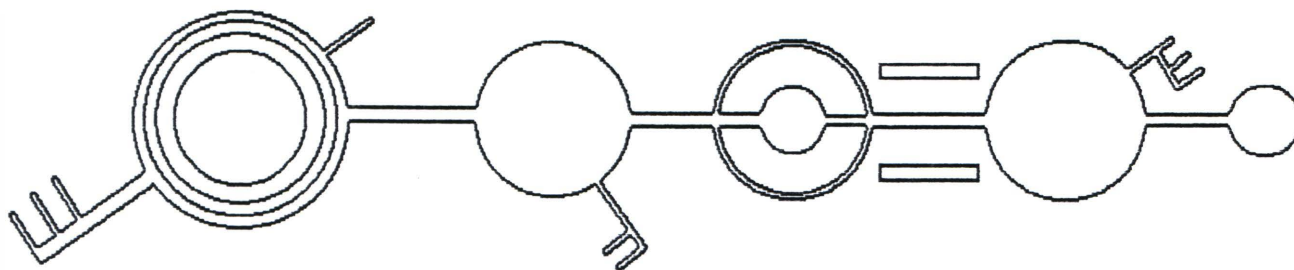
Raymond Cox, Halesowen, West Midlands.

John Rimmer replies:

In the immortal words of Fergus Cashin [who he? - Ed.] this one will run and run. The letters above provide an excellent summary of the climate of crop circle opinion as we wait for the Season of '92 to start. They also give me the opportunity to reply to one or two of the points raised by our correspondents and perhaps tie up a couple of loose ends in my article.

I am glad that Ralph Noyes agrees with me, because I agree entirely with him (although he is a bit of a tease, because really he doesn't agree with me at all!) There is of course all the difference in the world between 'persons unknown' and 'intelligence unknown'. If Mr Noyes's elegant penthouse flat was burgled the police may well conclude that they were dealing with 'persons unknown', even if they were fairly sure they were gentlemen of the striped jersey and bag labelled 'swag' persuasion. Ralph may also consider Chelsea's finest 'alarmist' or 'over-imaginative' if they suggested the culprit was an 'unknown intelligence', suggesting a possible break-in by educated goldfish from Zeta Reticulli or an aberrant thought-form from the distant reaches of the Kings Road! If Ralph will forgive me I will not agree with him for the time being, and shall, like the CID at Lucan Place, continue to speak of 'persons unknown'.

Raymond Cox raises a number



of specific points which I think can be answered one by one.

I am always very dubious about claims over what hoaxers would or would not do, and even more unsure about what artists might and might not do, so I have no idea why anyone would want to go back to make small alterations to crop circles they had created. But such is the nature of the creative genius that I have no doubt they would do just that. I can also see no reason why three groups of artists should not be out on the same night doing their work. Presumably some nights are better for this sort of operation than others and we might indeed expect more than one group to be abroad on a good night. As someone who lives near Heathrow, directly beneath the main flight path I am also a little dubious about claims that people who live near airports and bases are intimately familiar with everything that might be flying overhead. I certainly have heard some pretty non-standard sounding aircraft (Concorde, although a twice daily visitor to the airspace above John Dee Cottage can still cause a momentary twinge of panic from time to time!); I am sure the situation is even more confusing near a military base. I therefore ask to be excused from being impressed by the testimony of the warden of Barbury Castle.

It certainly would be a complex task to produce a pattern like Barbury, but Peter Williams has produced a very convincing account of how a small group of hoaxers could have produced the figure using 'compass and straightedge' techniques. The problem with comparing 'known hoaxes' and 'genuine circles' is that all our criteria for determining genuineness (the 'layering' etc.) ultimately trace back to the original single circles of the early '80s. If even these were 'hoaxes', and Raymond Cox points out that the single circles are the kind most likely to be hoaxed, we are simply judging how well different techniques of circle-making match

Some of the more complex arrangements suggest nothing so much as occult sigils or glyphs writ large on the rural landscape. There is a kind of fairytale quality about them, a suggestion of enchanted circles and magic rings

up to each other.

It is curious that the meteorologists, having had their fingers burnt along with the 'unknown intelligencers' over the complex pictograms have retreated to a seemingly more reasonable hypothesis - the complex designs are indeed the work of hoaxers/artists, but the simple circles represent the genuine meteorological phenomenon. But surely the single circles are, as Raymond says, the easiest to create manually. So if you accept that Alton Barnes, Barbury and the other classics are man-made there is no logical reason why you should attempt to deny that *all* of them are man-made.

This one will indeed run and run, but having used my Editorial prerogative in a blatantly unfair manner to get the last word, I feel reluctant to impose too much more of this argument on the long-suffering readers of *Magonia*. I am not exactly saying 'this correspondence is now closed', but if anyone wants to open it up again they are going to have to have something radically new to ensure that the argument is moving forward. Like this next letter, for instance:

Dear Mr Rimmer

Your article in *Magonia* 41 covering the latest developments in the field of crop circle research prompts me to ask: am I alone in seeing a parallel between this fascinating subject and the peculiarly American pastime of cattle mutilating? At first glance the two phenomena might appear to have little in common. But consider: both are connected with the agrarian/agricultural communities, with husbandry and with the provision of food for society at large. What is more, both involve the cutting or imprinting of circular markings, and the deliberate 'spoiling' of an element in the food chain. Finally both are carried out systematically by persons or forces unknown, and appear to aimed at imprinting a symbolic message directly onto the collective unconscious.

There is also some overlap between the two phenomena. Jacques Vallee cites a typical case in *Messengers of Deception* "About two miles over in a field was a *perfectly round circle* (my emphasis). The heifer was lying in the middle of this circle with its head to the north... the sex organs were cut off and gone. The navel was cut out *in a round circle* (again, my emphasis - I.B.) and the meat inside was not touched..." Vallee adds that about a quarter of a mile away the local sheriff found another circle: "This one was about the same [size] as the other, but the wheat was about four inches tall and it had been burned clean. These circles were about thirty feet across..."

In cases like this the crop circle/mutilation interface need hardly be stressed, the facts speak for themselves. the mutilated heifer is found in the centre of a rudimentary crop circle; a similar circle is cut into its hide. Investigators later find another circle in an adjacent field. (according to Michael D Albers, landowner Darwood Marshall told the local sheriff "that he had pulled another

dead animal, this one a steer, out of this second circle several days earlier.")

The entire scenario is difficult to explain by any of the usual UFO-related hypotheses, and appears instead to have been carried out in order to dramatize the concerns of a small but well-equipped and highly efficient elite. I have admittedly chosen this case because it tends to support my contention. But too many people have reported similar details for us to dismiss their claims out of hand.

It may also be worth bearing in mind that the cattle mutilators of the western USA, like their crop circle manufacturing counterparts here in the UK, have so far shown themselves to be remarkably elusive. Among other things they are able to carry out their handiwork in complete darkness, often under the very noses of would-be investigators. This has led inevitably to suspicion in some quarters that the military establishment may somehow be involved in the mutilations, either actively or in an advisory capacity. And of course this too is rapidly becoming a staple item of crop circle lore. Likewise the suspicion of 'cultist activity', etc. Clearly we are witnessing here the development of parallel belief systems based on types of activity which, while they may appear disparate on the face of it, are remarkably similar in their consequences.

The average crop circle enthusiast would no doubt balk at all this. And perhaps rightly so. After all, there is a sense in which most crop circles actually *enhance* the surrounding countryside. Some of the more complex arrangements suggest nothing so much as occult sigils or glyphs writ large on the rural landscape. There is a kind of fairytale quality about them, a suggestion of enchanted circles and magic rings. The cattle mutilations by contrast, inspire only fear and revulsion. And yet, both types of activity are seemingly carried out in order to transmit a symbolic message to society at large. What is the exact nature of this putative 'message'? That is for each of us to decide individually*.

Best wishes

Ian Blake, Austerfield, Doncaster
*Actually the crop circles are, to me, symbolic of nothing more than man's foolish desire to imprint his

signature on nature. But that's just me... I.B.

And now for something completely different

Dear John

John Harney Rightly points out the mistakes in the Roswell UFO affair as documented in the recent book by Kevin D. Randle and Donald R. Schmitt; yet still seems reluctant to accept the official weather balloon explanation.

The main reason the various writers on this case give for rejecting the balloon-plus-radar-reflector answer is that the USAF officers who retrieved the debris ought to have been able to identify it as such. Not necessarily. For instance the debris had, according to contemporary accounts, been lying in the desert for nearly three weeks before being recovered and was thus subject to the elements during this time. (UFO writers gloss over this fact). Also the debris was scattered over quite a wide area. It is by no means certain that the two or three USAF men who saw the widely scattered remains of a balloon, plus a shattered six-pointed star radar target, spread over the desert, would recognise it. Had they ever seen one of these reflectors? It is also significant that the rancher in question took no notice of the debris when he first discovered it, but only started collecting it *after* he had been into town and learned of the first 'flying-disc' stories.

Another strong pointer is that the FBI in Dallas did send a teletype to Washington which clearly describes the nature and identity of the recovered object, which is exactly as given in the press at the time. This FBI teletype was not released until the late 1970s, and is the only official document ever found on the Roswell UFO. It makes no mention of the 'national security' which the pro-Roswell writers are so obsessed with, and is not even classified. In other words, the USAF told the FBI exactly what they told the press.

The USAF urgency over the matter was due to the rather hasty press release put out, by a PIO man who had not seen the debris (and who has never seen it to this day). Once this went out, of course officials got agitated and tried to put the damper on it because of all the unwanted publicity. Another factor was that the Roswell base was then a storage place

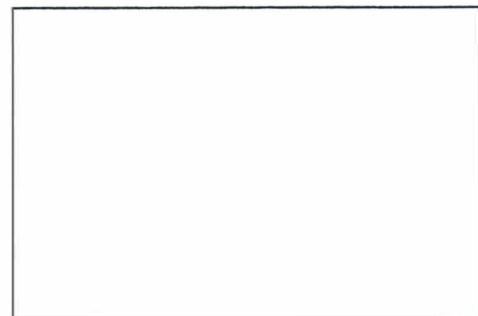
for the early atomic bombs with, obviously, very high security in force.

Randle and Schmitt have gone to a lot of trouble certainly, but cannot seem to separate fact from fantasy, and are relying totally on 40-year-old memories, most of them second or third hand. The timeline of events they construct, in part 4 of their book, is truly laughable. (It is slightly revised in the more professional looking CUFOS publication *The Roswell Report*, issued shortly after the book, but is still laughable). We must also remember that many of these witnesses were originally interviewed by the highly pro-ETHers Stan Friedman and Bill Moore in 1978-79, and some have since achieved publicity by appearing on networked TV shows. One seldom mentioned fact is that the chief witness, major Jesse Marcel, starred in a documentary film *UFOs are Real* in which Friedman was adviser and script-writer, even before the first Roswell book (Berlitz and Moore) came out. We need not suppose Marcel did it for peanuts.

John Harney should realise that there was no mention of a 'crash' in the original accounts, nor of course any mention of bodies. As far as Roswell is concerned these were only added many years later. The original reports tell of the discovery of a light instrument, nothing more, and there were no witnesses to its descent.

The stories have grown out of all proportion since the original Moore-Friedman investigations and are growing even now. Stan Friedman is bringing out a further Roswell book this year showing that there were not one but two crashes on the same day!

If any doubter still wants to know what the Roswell UFO was, he need only read that brief FBI teletype. Regards,
Christopher Allan, Alsager, Stoke on Trent.



GOOD, Timothy. **Alien Liaison: The Ultimate Secret**. London, Random Century Ltd, 1991. £14.99

Rumours about crashed saucers and their extraterrestrial pilots being held by the US government have been current since the late 1940s and they are still very persistent. Some may thus wonder whether there might be some substance behind these improbable yarns. Good provides us with a summary of the alleged activities of the aliens and of the alleged efforts of US government agencies to keep them secret. It is well known, however, that the US government is pretty hopeless at keeping secrets; and if there are any aliens buzzing around the Earth they could reveal their presence to us all whenever they felt so inclined, regardless of what the US or any other government would wish.

It seems that there are at least nine types of ETs keeping an eye on us, but the main ones are those generally referred to as the 'Greys' and the 'Nordics'. The Greys come from a planet in the Zeta Reticuli system and some of them, living and dead, are in the custody of the US government. This is because of their habit of crashing their saucers in American deserts within easy reach of military bases. Sometimes they even crash their saucers into one another. Driving tests for the aspiring saucer pilots of Zeta Reticuli are obviously not very rigorous.

The two stars of the Zeta Reticuli system are about 37 light years away, not very far in galactic terms, but surely a very long journey when travelling at any practicable speed. Not so, apparently. Each saucer is equipped with three 'gravity generators'. You focus the generators on the place you want to go to and turn them on. This warps space and time. Then you switch off the generators and -- sproing! -- there you are. As the late Tommy Cooper would have said: "Just like that!"

In September 1989, Good received a letter from the director of a 'Special Development Group' which was allegedly helping to organise a travelling exhibition and presentation with the general theme of the future of space technology. This was to include a section on UFOs. Good suggested his friend Bob Oechsler, an ex-NASA man, as a consultant. Oechsler kept him

informed of developments, including a meeting at the Pentagon with a general who was assisting with the project. The general asked him if it would be best to have real (dead) aliens and saucers at the exhibition or should they use mock-ups. This is only one of many such preposterous stories told to Good, which he is apparently inclined to take seriously. The problem is that Good is an honest man who evidently finds it hard to believe that people can tell him real whoppers without blushing or grinning. Not being a liar himself, he can't see how others can tell such untruths with every appearance of sincerity.

Of course, Good does not believe all the stories. Some are supposed to be disinformation deliberately fed to selected people to throw a screen of confusion around the true facts. His conclusion is: "The evidence available to me suggests that...we are being visited by a number of extraterrestrial groups."

But what does the evidence suggest? It suggests that disinformation is sometimes circulated to confuse persons attempting to obtain information about secret military projects. There is also evidence that several governments maintain organisations to investigate UFO reports. They do this in the interests of national security and air safety. They work in seclusion so that they can carry

on their investigations without being harassed by journalists, cranks and ufologists. If any UFO experts have any evidence of ETs apart from amazing stories or fuzzy photographs, let them produce it.
John Harney

BORD, Janet and Colin. **Life Beyond Earth: man's contact with the space people**. Grafton, 1991. £18.99

In this book the Bords examine the idea of interstellar communication less through the lens of science than through the eye of popular folklore -- the stories of people who claim to have encountered, contacted or been abducted by space beings. Though older readers will be aware of many of these stories, others will be new: included are a couple of 'lost abductions'. From their round-up the reader will grasp the essential continuity between contactee and abduction lore, despite what is said across the Atlantic. What separates them is not some objective standard of believability but a vastly increased sophistication of imagination between, say, Buck Nelson and Betty Andreasson.

Scientific opinion about extraterrestrial life tends to polarise between those, principally astronomers, who seem to regard the universe as teeming with surrogate Los Angelinos, and those, often evolutionary biologists who regard human beings as probably both physically and psychologically

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unique. The universe may indeed teem with 'life' but that life will be *very* different from us. 'They' will not be building computers and spaceships, but pursuing their own lifeways, products of their own evolutionary history. Computers and spaceships are probably just two of a vast myriad of ways in which lifeforms adapt to their environments.

Janet Bord tends to agree with this approach, so does Colin until halfway through his conclusion when he seems to reverse course and talk of cosmic intelligences.

Unfortunately the idea of 'parallel universes' is dragged in to avoid the inevitable conclusion that ufonaut stories represent an internal reality. It is not clear what is meant by 'parallel universe' in this context: none of the ideas about such universes which are discussed on the edges of physics describe 'places' one can pop in and out of in downtown Neasden. Some of the more accessible might be found on the other side of a black hole [Have you tried to get to Neasden along the North Circular lately? Ed.], others involve playing with energy on the level of the Big

Bang itself. 'Inhabitants' of such realms would be even less like the patrons of a Los Angeles health food shop than the strangest inhabitants of the fifth planet of Tau Ceti.
Peter Rogerson.

FOWLER, Raymond. *The Watchers: the secret design behind UFO abductions*. Bantam, 1991, £4.99

Briefly mentioned in our previous issue, this book introduces several new or newish themes into abduction mythology. When we last heard from Betty we had not heard about hybrid babies, now we have.

BETTY ANDREASSON LUCA:

Midwife to the stars?

Betty has too. Giving birth to the hybrid herself would by now be rather passe, so she introduces the motif of the midwife's visit to the afirey birth, with herself as midwife or attendant. These Visitors are size shifters, and she is reduced in size to meet them (a motif only known previously in the British cases of BS near Warminster in the early seventies, and a male member of that family from North Wales whose name we dare not mention for fear of a long anguished letter from a certain UFO magazine editor, possibly followed by one from m'learned friends).

The Andreasson stories become increasingly religious in tone. The aliens proclaim themselves 'The Watchers'. I'm sure that Andreasson and Fowler are aware that in Jewish apocryphal tradition The Watchers were the sons of god who lusted after the daughters of men, as mentioned in Genesis. they were supposed to be the lower orders of angels closest to earth - which surely will be announced as a shock discovery in the next volume, in which Betty announces the Secon Coming.

Fowler has another card to play: he is becoming an abductee himself, in rather a vague sort of way. This includes the large 'biopsy holes' which have replaced strange scars as the mark of the abductee. Abduction book authors becoming abductees may be the theme of the nineties. Randles has put a tentative toe in the water, and you just know Budd is going to be next. How long can the full story of Rimmer's encounter in the summer of 1972 be kept secret.

Peter Rogerson

